RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Although pathological gambling is a serious social issue, the psychological motivations that underlie it are poorly understood. The purpose of the study was to 1) to develop a multi-factor gambling motivation model by administering a self-report questionnaire to undergraduate students; 2) to test the effectiveness of this model on regular gamblers of varying degrees of severity; and 3) to determine which of two models, the monetary motive mediation model or the parallel model (explained later), better describe the influence of gambling motives on gambling severity.

PURPOSE

The purposes were: to construct items for a multi-factor gambling motivation model, and to determine the reliability of the gambling motivational scale.

PARTICIPANTS

66 participants from Korea generated items for the questionnaire that would be used to develop the multi-factor gambling motivation model; 34 were graduate students (mean age: 28 years, 59% male, 85% non-problem gamblers according to the Korean-South Oaks Gambling Screen, or K-SOGS) from universities in Korea, and 32 were horse-racing gamblers (mean age: 43 years, 81% male, 78% probable problem gamblers according to the K-SOGS) who were seeking help for problem gambling. The questionnaire was tested (to develop the multi-factor gambling motivational model) using 240 undergraduate students from Korea (mean age: 24 years, 64% male, 83% non-problem gamblers according to the K-SOGS).

PROCEDURE

The 66 original participants who generated the questionnaire items were asked to write down more than five motives of gambling in response to questions like “Why do you think people gamble?” Overall, 67 items related to amusement, socialization, excitement, avoidance, and monetary motives were devised. Two psychologists deleted overlapping/unclear items, leaving a scale with 51 items. The initial 66 participants were also asked to complete the K-SOGS, which assessed severity of gambling problems, and to report the frequency and type of gambling in which they participated. The 240 undergraduate participants who tested the questionnaire were asked to rate their agreement with each of the 51 questionnaire items on 5-point Likert-type scales. Statistical tests (i.e., exploratory factor analysis and confirmatory factor analysis) were conducted to develop the final gambling motivation scale, and to determine which model most effectively explained the gambling motivations (i.e., the five-factor gambling motive model was compared with five alternative models which had fewer factors).

KEY RESULTS

The statistical technique used to develop the final gambling motivation scale (i.e., exploratory factor analysis) revealed that 35 of the 51 items should be selected for use in the final questionnaire, and that five factors were most appropriate for the model (i.e., motivation to gamble was best explained by five different factors/motives); these five factors/motives accounted for 66% of the variance in scores on the questionnaire. The five factors/motives were: 1) the excitement motive, 2) the socialization motive, 3) the avoidance motive, 4) the monetary motive, and 5) the amusement motive. The statistical technique used to determine which of the six models better explained the questionnaire data (i.e., confirmatory factor analysis) revealed that compared to the five alternative motivational models, the five-factor gambling model most accurately measured psychological factors that motivate gambling. Further, the five-factor gambling motivation scale was found to be highly reliable/consistent (alpha = .94).

LIMITATIONS

In both studies, participants were from a single ethnic group; results should be replicated with more diverse samples. Also, additional variables related to problem gambling were not assessed (e.g., the frequency, period, and amount of gambling); it is possible that other factors motivate these behaviours. Finally, intrinsic motivators were not included, so it is not clear how they relate to gambling severity.
CONCLUSIONS
Throughout the study, a five-factor gambling motivation model was developed and tested using both undergraduate students and frequent gamblers and was shown to be a good assessment tool for psychological motivations for gambling in frequent and non-frequent gamblers. Further, the monetary motive model was found to be more effective than the parallel model in explaining the influence of specific gambling motives on gambling severity. Replications of the study that address the limitations noted above are needed.

KEYWORDS: pathological gambling, five-factor model, motivation, addiction, South Korea

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